



Milton Moon: Crafting modernism

'In this, my 'ninety second year', over sixty of which I have been a potter, I remain concerned, if a little obsessed, with the challenge of making pots, which although belonging to a ceramic tradition of some eight thousand years or more, are undeniably and uniquely Australian. With all my changes of expression this has remained constant.'

– Milton Moon, 2015

Adelaide, Australia: Opening on 6 May, *Milton Moon: Crafting modernism* explores the life and career of Milton Moon AM (1926–2019), one of the most important Australian potters of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. *Crafting modernism* contextualises Moon's sixty-year practice in ceramics within the wider story of Australian art for the first time, examining the influence of the Australian landscape, Australian modernism and Japanese culture on his work.

Featuring 72 ceramic works as well as rarely-seen paintings by the artist and archival material including photographs, invitations, and newspaper articles, *Crafting modernism* reveals Moon's highly original and painterly style which earned him a reputation as a pioneer of the modernist approach to ceramics in the post-war period.

AGSA Director, Rhana Devenport ONZM says, 'It has been thirty-two years since AGSA celebrated the work of the artist with *Milton Moon Retrospective*, held in 1991 and curated by Christopher Menz. Given the recent passing of this remarkable Australian artist and increasing interest in the area of ceramics by the Australian public, it is timely to examine his significance afresh. The work of Milton Moon has forever influenced the arc of Australian art history.'

Curated by Rebecca Evans, Curator of Decorative Arts & Design, AGSA, *Crafting modernism* explores key moments of transformation in Moon's career, from his earthenware ceramics of the late 1950s to his larger, more

conceptual works in clay, through to his experiments in glazes and oxides—bringing together works from AGSA’s collection, the estate of the artist and private collections across Adelaide as well as key loans from QAGOMA, Powerhouse Museum and Bendigo Art Gallery.

Throughout his career, Moon was primarily concerned with making pots which drew from his own environment rather than influenced by international trends. An avid diver and bushwalker, his work explored the elemental and textural nature of the Australian environment.

As the artist’s son Damon Moon has described, ‘This preoccupation continued throughout his life: in the early work he would marvel over the growth of the corals he encountered when scuba-diving, the mangroves and rainforests of Queensland; in the final years it was the mottling of bark and lichens and the rupture and coruscations of the arid lands in South Australia, picked out in ochres and eucalypt green, that became part of a singular artistic vision.’

Moon held a great interest in the work of Australian modernist artists, most notably John Olsen, Fred Williams and Ian Fairweather, and nods to these contemporaries can be seen in works such as his famed *Fairweather pot*, 1966, which echoes the imagery of Fairweather in its painted forms and dripping glaze.

Importantly, *Crafting modernism* also explores the influence of Japanese ceramics and culture on Moon, both his work and life. After receiving a Myer Foundation Geijutsu Fellowship in 1974, Moon spent a year living and working in Japan, a period that led to an ongoing interest in spiritualism and Zen Buddhism, as well as marking a distinct turning point in his practice as seen through later works included in the exhibition.

Milton Moon: Crafting modernism is accompanied by a fully-illustrated, 136-page catalogue, supported by the Gordon Darling Foundation and private donors, and featuring insightful essays about Moon’s life and career by Rebecca Evans, Damon Moon and others. The exhibition is presented at AGSA from 6 May to 6 August 2023, entry is free.

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KEY DATES Exhibition Season | 6 May – 6 August 2023

IMAGES agsa.sa.gov.au/media/miltonmoon/

Image caption: (clockwise from left): Milton Moon, born Melbourne 1926, died Adelaide, 2019, *Jar*, 1969, Adelaide, stoneware; South Australian Government Grant 1969; *Tall jar*, c.1972, Adelaide, stoneware; Morgan Thomas Bequest Fund 1972; *Jar*, 1973, Adelaide, stoneware; South Australian Government Grant 1973; *Vase, blue-green, green, white, black oxides*, 1962–63, Tarragindi, Queensland, stoneware, wheel-thrown; South Australian Government Grant 1990; *Yourambulla landscape pot*, 1990, Summertown, Adelaide Hills, stoneware, wheel-thrown; South Australian Government Grant 1990; *Tall vase*, 1977–1978, Summertown, Adelaide Hills, stoneware; South Australian Government Grant assisted by the Crafts Board of the Australian Council 1978; *Fish pot*, 1970s, Summertown, South Australia, stoneware; Bequest of Sylvia and Derek Duckhouse 2020; *Vase*, 1970s, Summertown, South Australia, stoneware; Bequest of Sylvia and Derek Duckhouse 2020; *Open vase*, 1970s, Summertown, South Australia, stoneware; Bequest of Sylvia and Derek Duckhouse 2020; *Floor pot*, from the Brachina series, 1997, Beulah Park, Adelaide, stoneware; Gift of Milton and Bette Moon 2000, all works © Estate of Milton Moon.